

Press Release

HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Department of Emergency Services



PUBLIC SAFETY

"Ensuring a Safe
Harford"

EDUCATION

"Preparing Now,
Building for the Future"

EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT

"Governing Smarter"

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

"Growing and Sustaining
Harford's Prosperity"

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

"Protecting Our
Environment"

QUALITY LIVING

"Safeguarding What is
Important to Harford
County Citizens"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 11, 2013

Media Contact: Robert B. Thomas, Jr. at 410-638-3408 or 443-617-1954

Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team Celebrates 25 Years of Service

(Forest Hill, MD) - - 2013 marks 25 years of service for the Harford County Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Response Team. The team, initially comprised of four members, was conceptually formed in late 1987 at the direction of the Harford County Government administration, as a result of the passage of the SARA Title III law and to help ensure the ability of Harford County to respond to and mitigate hazardous material incidents. The Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team first call for service occurred in 1988.

The initial team of four members, Chief James Terrell, Deputy Chief Larry Mabe, Captain Rusty Leftwich and former Deputy First Class Clarence Ross of the Harford County Sheriff's Office started a Hazardous Materials Response Team from scratch that has grown to into a professional, well respected and recognized Team of more than 25 members.

The four member Harford County HazMat Team worked hard to obtain as much knowledge as possible in a short period of time and began taking a variety of chemical emergency training. The HazMat Team were regular attendees at the University of Maryland, University of Delaware in Wilmington and at other seminars and training opportunities as well. In the first year of operation HazMat Team members gained more than 500 hours of response training and began the never-ending process of purchasing much needed resources for chemical emergencies.

Additionally, the HazMat Team worked with the County Department of Law to obtain the first HazMat Law, Article 146 of the Harford County Code. The Haz Mat law provided emergency responders certain rights, as well as the ability to charge for services and conduct enforcement of the chemical industry and private sector.

The first HazMat Team response vehicle was a surplus Department of Parks and Recreation dump truck loaded with sand and absorbent materials. In 1990 Harford County purchased a used bus from a local bus contractor which was used to carry both personnel and equipment to assist the HazMat Team with hazardous materials mitigation.

Following formation of the initial HazMat Team, there were several attempts to add additional members to the Team utilizing personnel from various departments of county government. However, these attempts proved futile.

(more)

Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team Celebrates 25 Years of Service
July 11, 2013
Page Two

As the Team progressed, additional members were added from the ranks of the Harford County fire service, several of whom received extensive training and experience with career departments throughout the Baltimore – Washington metropolitan area.

Over the years the number of calls has steadily increased from a dozen or so calls in the early years to more than 150 calls for service in 2012. The nature of haz mat calls for service has also changed significantly over the years from the early days of merely advising the fire service on a call for service, to fuel spills, chemical spills, underground tank leaks, as well as highway and railway accidents among others.

Although there have been many changes and additions to the Haz Mat Team since its inception, both Mabe and Ross remain active members. Mabe retired in 2010 as Deputy Manager of the Harford County Division of Emergency Operations and Ross, who retired in 2007 from the Harford County Sheriff's Office, have maintained their certifications and training after more than 25 years of service.

One of the most significant challenges facing the Harford County HazMat Team today is the on-going process of staying up-to-date with mandates for training and certification, as well as maintaining calibration of instrumentation and a state of constant readiness.

Commenting on the HazMat Team's involvement with the chemical industry, Michael Brunicke, Chief of the Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team said, "We are committed to work closely with the chemical industry, conducting prevention inspections in an effort to ensure public safety is maintained". Currently there are approximately 160 companies in Harford County which have hazardous materials or chemicals on site and routinely report to Harford County as required pursuant to the Hazardous Materials Law.

Both Mabe and Ross have received national recognition for their work and performance as members of the Harford County HazMat Team. Retired Deputy Chief Mabe was honored by the International Association of Fire Chiefs Haz Mat Committee with the "Level A Award" in 2009. Ross was honored earlier this year by the IAFC HazMat Committee with the first ever "Making a Difference Award" at a national conference in Baltimore. Ross was also recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1999 as recipient of the "EPA Region III Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Award".

The 2009 study of the Harford County volunteer fire and EMS system by Carroll Brubaker and Associates titled, "**Fire and EMS Services Master Plan for Harford County**", made the following observations regarding the Harford County HazMat Team, "*The Study Team reviewed the Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team Standard Operating Guideline (SOGs) and found many well written and organized procedures covering both administrative and operational aspects of the team*". Furthermore the report stated, "*The Study Team found the HazMat Team to be adequately equipped, trained, staffed and ready to respond to calls. The Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team is a well-organized response agency that is capable of handling a broad scope of hazardous materials emergency incidents*".

(more)

Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team Celebrates 25 Years of Service

July 11, 2013

Page Three

“The Harford County Hazardous Materials Response Team has provided exemplary service to the citizens of Harford County and the greater Baltimore region for the past 25 years and we look forward to continuing our record of distinguished service for many years to come”, said Russell J. Strickland, Director of the Harford County Department of Emergency Services. “Our team is committed to providing the best service possible to our citizens, business and industry, as well as our police and fire service public safety partners,” Strickland added.

- 30 -

“Preserving Harford’s past; promoting Harford’s future”